



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **DEMOCRATS PUSH BILLS TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

MADISON - Today, Legislative Democrats introduced a package of bills aimed at removing hurdles and expediting the Unemployment Insurance (UI) process for Wisconsinites. Since March, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has experienced an unprecedented number of unemployment claims due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation introduced today would eliminate hurdles people are facing in receiving their UI benefits. Under Governor Walker, Republicans implemented numerous, unnecessary barriers to receiving UI that are having a negative impact displaced workers during the current crisis. Assembly Democratic Leader Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) released the following statement:

**"Families and businesses across Wisconsin are facing unprecedented challenges. These bills can help improve and accelerate the process for people who need help now. The fact is, our economic recovery will be based, in part, on how financially secure we are able to keep families during the worst part of this crisis,"** Rep. Hintz stated. **"A quicker turnaround on an unemployment claim could literally be the difference between someone being evicted or staying in their home. State government must take every decisive action possible to eliminate unnecessary hurdles that have slowed down the process for people applying for unemployment insurance. During an emergency crisis time like this, if the legislature can act, it should act as quickly as possible."**

### Bill Descriptions

LRB 6244 - Wisconsin is one of only two states that prevent people with disabilities who are able to work from receiving unemployment benefits. This bill would allow social security disability (SSDI) recipients to receive concurrent unemployment insurance benefits.

LRB 6246 - Under current law, individuals cannot receive extended UI benefits when participating in extended occupational training. This bill would reinstate the ability of those participating in extended occupational training to receive extended UI benefits.

LRB 6249 - Currently, claimants are ineligible for UI during weeks where they hit a wage threshold. This bill would temporarily suspend the \$500 wage threshold for recipients of unemployment insurance benefits.

LRB 6254 - The current definition of "suitable work" creates challenges for claimants. This bill reinstates DWD's authority to determine by administrative rule what constitutes suitable work a claimant must accept if offered, and what labor market conditions to review based on the number of weeks that the claimant has received benefits.



LRB 6256 - Several laws enacted over the last decade have restricted DWD's ability to increase access to unemployment insurance when appropriate. This bill expands DWD's authority to promulgate rules that provide waivers for work search and job registration requirements.

LRB 6257 - Currently, payments on valid unemployment insurance claims are delayed for one week. This bill would permanently eliminate the requirement that claimants wait one week before receiving benefits.

LRB 6265 - Currently, claimants are required to perform four work searches per week. This bill lowers the required work searches from four to two per week and repeals the provision allowing DWD to require by rule additional work searches.

LRB 6362 - The concept of substantial fault has caused confusion for both employers and employees and when employees are entitled to benefits when they are discharged by their employers. This bill would eliminate the concept of substantial fault being a disqualifying factor.

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